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ABSTRACT

The author analyzes mainstreaming (as mandated by P.L. 94-142--the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) from an organizational perspective and maintains that resistance to the demands of mainstreaming is both natural and predictable. Mainstreaming terms are defined, an historical perspective is offered, and hypothetical case studies of handicapped children are given to illustrate representative school programs in three different time periods. Finally, a mainstreaming model is offered which looks at five factors that serve as facilitators and prohibitors of change: relative advantage, compatability, complexity, trialability, and observability. Ways to overcome barriers to mainstreaming (such as build a reward system) are also considered. (SBH)

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OSSC BULLETIN

DAMMING THE MAINSTREAM: BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INNOVATION

by

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PREFACE

The Mainstreaming Law, PL 94-142, requires schools to place handicapped children in the "least restrictive environment" possible. Educators approach this mandate with varying degrees of anxiety, resistance and compliance.

In this *BULLETIN*, "Damming the Mainstream," Carol Sivage analyzes mainstreaming from an organizational perspective. Viewed in this light, she maintains that resistance to the demands of mainstreaming is natural and predictable. Mainstreaming also can be considered an innovation. The author assumes that a study of research on innovations provides a useful perspective on mainstreaming as well as the natural barriers to its implementation.

Carol Sivage is a doctoral candidate in educational administration and special education at the University of Oregon.

In this *BULLETIN* administrators and school board members will find helpful suggestions for breaking down predictable organizational barriers to mainstreaming.

Kenneth A. Erickson
Executive Secretary
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DAMMING THE MAINSTREAM:

BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INNOVATION

I will never accept a handicapped child in my classroom. I will quit teaching first.

Why should I participate in mainstreaming handicapped children? What will I get out of it?

All the resource consultant does is offer inservice courses or consultation once a week. What I want is daily help in the classroom. Those cookbook approaches just don't work for me.

Things will settle down if we keep a low profile and don't do much.

The above comments are from real teachers and administrators. They illustrate concerns of general educators with mainstreaming, and they reflect actions, reactions and passivity on the part of teachers and administrators toward integrating the handicapped in their schools. The comments reflect sentiments that are indicators of major differences in perspective of general and special education.

Special education folklore suggests that the unprecedented scope of Public Law 94-142 has had a major impact on the lives of public school teachers and administrators. Special educators have recently begun to view themselves as "St. Christophers" eager to help the general educator "ford the currents of the mainstream, using the special educator's superior strength and wisdom to accomplish this feat." When general educators

don't "jump in," the blame is placed on inferior skills, poor training, or bad attitudes. The problem is more complex than this. It is the attributes of school organizations, not the attributes of individual members of those organizations, that produce the dams in the mainstream.

This *BULLETIN* will discuss barriers to mainstreaming. After terms are defined, an historical perspective will be offered. Hypothetical case studies of handicapped children will illustrate representative school programs in three different time periods. Mainstreaming then will be discussed as an innovation. The organizational framework follows the model of Everett M. Rogers, (1971), who identified five characteristics of innovations that influence the rate of their adoption. They are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. It is proposed that the rate of acceptance and adoption of mainstreaming as an innovation can be positively influenced by careful attention to these characteristics. Conversely, lack of attention to these characteristics proposed by Rogers creates barriers to implementation, or the dams that slow the mainstreaming current.

Definition of Terms

It has been ten years since the appearance of Dunn's (1968) often quoted article questioning the appropriateness of special class placement for mildly handicapped children. Since that time, a significant portion of educational literature has dealt with the concept and practice of mainstreaming. Kaufman, Gottlieb, Agard and Kucik (1975) have provided the following definition:

> Mainstreaming refers to the temporal, instructional and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers based on an ongoing individually determined educational planning and programming process. It requires clarification of responsibility among regular and special education administrative, instructional and support personnel.

With the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for the Handicapped Act of 1975, the need to mainstream was mandated by law. The intent and goals of PL 94-142 call for significant, far reaching and permanent changes in the fabric of American education. Mainstreaming requires major changes in the roles, functions, culture and structure of public schools (Arends and Arends, 1978).

An Historical Perspective

An historical perspective offers a measure of the changes that are proposed. Consider the following imaginary children, and the school programs they have been offered in three different eras.*

The time is 1920. Most children attend school. Some youths of high school age are working, some are apprentices, a number just hang around. Linda, age 8, falls into none of these categories. She is crippled by cerebral palsy and is hidden away in a back bedroom at home. Linda's mother feeds her and cares for her physical needs, but she is embarrassed that her daughter is disfigured and repulsive. Few outside the family know that Linda exists.

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*Adapted from a paper by Robert L. Egbert (1978), from the author's personal experiences in special classes, and from observations and discussions with parents and teachers.

Annie is 15 in 1920. She is not in school either. She started first grade when she was 5, but in three years she learned to read only a few words, was unable to spell, and performed only the simplest counting tasks. Annie began attending school less and less frequently. She now works as a hired girl, scrubbing and dusting and doing dishes. Annie is a good worker, but she has to be told everything she is to do, and she cannot be trusted with complex tasks.

At 9 years of age, Billy is in school in 1920, but probably not for long. Billy is a real hell raiser, whose most recent feat was burning down a garage. He curses at his teacher, fights, shoots spit wads, and stays away from school whenever it pleases him to do so.

By 1965 life has changed significantly for Linda, Annie and Billy, and for their peers. Acknowledging the handicapped child, society expects educators to meet the individual needs of all children. Once again there is a Linda with cerebral palsy. Neighbors and friends know her and converse with her when they visit. Confined to a wheelchair, Linda spends most of her time at home. She is enrolled in school, however, and receives the services of a visiting teacher, which allows her to succeed in basic school subjects.

The 1965 Annie has a different life. She is enrolled in a special class for the retarded. She enters school by the side door and furtively moves down stairs to the basement classroom. Everyone knows that the students in her class are retarded and cannot learn. Annie avoids contacts with students outside her classroom because of the name calling and

teasing. She is socially withdrawn and unhappy, though her special class teacher has helped her learn to read.

Billy still creates problems in 1965. The school psychologist has diagnosed his antisocial, aggressive behavior as an acting out of his frustrations with an unhappy home life and low normal I.Q. Billy is in a special class for the emotionally disturbed. Behavior modification techniques have helped him to control a great deal of his disruptive behavior, but he is influenced by the poor behavior of other children in the class. He has few friends.

A View of the Future

Witness what the year 1980 brings! Linda attends school regularly, spending part of each day in a regular classroom. She moves readily through halls and lunch lines in her wheelchair. When her class went to the zoo, the other children took turns pushing Linda's wheelchair and riding on the back. Linda goes to a resource room for motor coordination exercises several times a week. The student teacher in her regular classroom goes along, in order to learn special techniques from the visiting physical therapist. A consulting teacher visits with Linda's regular teacher, student teacher, and the resource teacher to discuss Linda's progress, and ways the school can be adapted to suit Linda's needs. Linda's mother is an active PTA member and has organized a school wide carnival to earn money for new specialized play equipment that can be adapted for all children's use.

Annie's school life is different in 1980. Approximately half her day is spent in regular classes learning basic literacy mathematics and social skills. At noon she walks to the local McDonald's where she spends several hours in a supervised work/study experience. The McDonald's manager thinks she is such a good worker that he has hired her, at minimum wage, to work after school. In talking about Annie, the manager says "She's a good worker because we expect it. We don't treat her any differently because she's retarded. After all, we trained her. It's an investment and it's paying off." He continues, "McDonald's method of training employees really helps with Annie. She knows exactly what to do. All the jobs are broken down into tasks, and the task lists are put on wall charts for everyone to see."

Nine year old Billy is no longer in a special class. Although his regular classroom teacher still sometimes despairs of his behavior, frequent consultations with the resource teacher, with whom Billy spends some time each week, have helped a great deal. A consulting teacher took over Billy's class for a week to free the classroom teacher to observe a novel technique for schoolwide behavior management. The principal attended too, because the new system involves a within classroom time-out procedure that would involve many teachers. At a faculty meeting, Billy's teacher and the principal will suggest the novel method as an alternative to sending so many problem children to the office. Billy's teacher has learned some really workable techniques for children with behavior problems, and is considering getting a Master's degree in Special Education. Her school district would help pay the tuition.

The developments over six decades seem clear. Initially the handicapped were cut off from persons other than members of their immediate

families. As the years passed, special classes and segregated day schools emerged as the most common educational setting for the handicapped. By 1960, almost 4% of all children between 5 and 17 were enrolled in classes of this kind. Despite the 1960s' commitment to the separation of handicapped and non-handicapped children, no consistent body of research suported the separation. Special educators and parents became disillusioned with segregated special class placement at about the same time. Thus, by the 1970s, pressure from parents and special educators has resulted in Public Law 94-142, which requires a "least restrictive environment" for all handicapped children. This is usually interpreted to mean the elimination of segregated special class placement, to the greatest extent possible. What it means to general educators is mainstreaming--the reversal of a 30 year trend to remove children with problems from regular classrooms. Mainstreaming is sometimes seen as imposed by a numerical minority, less than 10% of educators, who are often perceived as "skill elitists." When there are no rewards for general educators to participate, it is no wonder that they resist. Studied in this organizational context, resistance to mainstreaming is both natural and predictable.

An Organizational Framework

Success and failure of the mainstreaming movement must be associated with organizational characteristics in which the new program will be carried out. The attributes of school organizations--not the attributes of individual members of those organizations--make the critical difference in whether significant and lasting change occurs in education (Arends and Arends, 1978).

Everett Rogers presents a framework for looking at barriers to change. His book, *Communication of Innovations: A Cross Cultural Approach*, presents a comprehensive view of the five factors that serve as facilitators and prohibitors of change. These include: relative advantage, compatability, complexity, trialability, and observability. Each characteristic will be examined, and applied to mainstreaming as an innovation. Then some strategies will be proposed to break down the organizational barriers that impede the process of change.

1. Relative Advantage

Relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes. In the case of mainstreaming, the relative advantages of the innovation are seen mainly by special educators, parents of handicapped, and the handicapped children themselves. Regular classroom teachers tend to see only the disadvantage--extra children with problems in already crowded classrooms. Recent research by Hewett (1977) reveals that many classroom teachers see themselves as unqualified and poorly trained to work with difficult children.

A lack of clearly stated, building level mainstreaming goals makes many teachers unaware of the ways that mainstreaming will affect them. Teachers must know the direct personal impact of mainstreaming before they can begin to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the new system. They must know how "least restrictive environment" is to be translated in their school. The perception that every classroom will be filled with "grossly deformed waterheads" (Al Shanker, 1975, in a speech to the New

York Teachers Union) is all too common. The lack of a precise and personalized definition of mainstreaming, applied to individual classroom teachers, prohibits change.

2. Compatability

Compatability is the consistency of an innovation with existing values, past experiences and needs of teachers. An examination of the hypothetical case studies makes it clear that mainstreaming proposes a drastic change in values and experience for general educators. Since the 1950s, the trend has been to exclude children with problems. General educators learned that there were places and special teachers to help the handicapped, freeing them to teach the average student. Mainstreaming requires increased individualization and attention to children with special needs. It requires attention to extremes both of academic skills and behavior.

3. Complexity

The degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use is its complexity. Many general educators are afraid of handicapped children; they think of them as more <u>different</u> than they are <u>like</u> normal children. Behavior modification, diagnosis and prescription, task analysis and other special education techniques seem scientific and mysterious to many classroom teachers. Administrators must comply with a law that is copious and complex. As Sarason says, "At every step of the way one is dealing with interpretations of interpretations."

4. Trialability

Trialability is the amount that an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. In this case, PL 94-142 provides a mandate for implementation that is both clear and legally binding. As of 1975, each school is to provide the "least restrictive environment" to all handicapped children. Compliance teams from the State Department of Education will spot check local school districts. Parents of handicapped children are becoming militant in their demands for integrated classroom placements. Due process hearings and lawsuit threats are common worries for administrators. What little time there may have been for trial and piloting has passed. The pressure is on schools for programs and compliance now.

5. Observability

Observability is the visibility of results of an innovative practice. Rogers thinks that the rate of adoption is positively affected if positive events and actions are highly visible, and that the rate of adoption and acceptance will slow if negative results tend to be visible. It is the negative aspects of mainstreaming that are often the most apparent. Emotionally disturbed children tantrumming, retarded children getting lost in the hallways, and physically handicapped children holding up lunch lines are the visible and negative aspects of mainstreaming the handicapped.

Breaking the Dams in the Mainstream

Fortunately, there are ways to break down these barriers to change. The 1980s' version of "historical perspective" illustrates some of them. The work of Rogers and Arends identifies tasks and techniques that focus

on organizational rather than individual change to implement innovations. The following suggestions provide several ways to break down the dams in the mainstream. They are suggested for those who wish to implement mainstreaming in a manner that is responsive to organizational as well as individual needs.

1. Start Early

"Set the stage" for change. Build readiness to collaborate. Develop a critical mass of interested and able personnel. Try to include those teachers who are opinion leaders in the school. Encourage them to make preliminary visits to existing mainstreaming programs and begin an information and resource file of successful programs and ideas. Make this file accessible to all (relative advantage). Subscribe to magazines for the faculty lounge that stress techniques for educating children with problems. *Teaching Exceptional Children, The Pointer,* and *Journal of Learning Disabilities* are excellent and readable magazines. Begin a list of outside resources that includes parents and paraprofessionals who can help as volunteers with mainstreaming.

At early stages of planning consider a highly visible mainstreaming attempt. Begin with one high potential handicapped child (the more visible the handicap the better) and one teacher with positive attitudes. Set up the situation for success (trialability, observability) and make it work by extra careful planning. Make the success of the trial program visible to all.

2. Strengthen Processes for Communication, Problem Solving and Decisions

As Arends and Arends (1978) describe it, "mainstreaming will require new kinds of interpersonal interactions among people, new norms to support effective functioning by many work groups, and new organizational arrangements that stabilize and make permanent the new organizational reality. In short, innovations require changes by a total organization."

This readiness to work together as a total group can be built. Organizational Development specialists have identified techniques to improve the processes of communication, problem solving and decision making. *The Second Handbook of Organizational Development in Schools* is an excellent and easily understood resource to guide organizational development tasks. Chapter 3, "Clarifying Communications," and Chapter 4, "Establishing Goals," are especially pertinent to beginning stages of communication and planning for mainstreaming.

Effective mainstreaming requires communicating in new ways. The channels connecting general and special education traditionally have been weak. Separate and autonomous groups must be encouraged to behave interdependently for mainstreaming to be effective at a schoolwide level (compatability). Working together must be rewarded by those with authority (relative advantage).

The 1980s' vignette has examples of interdependent behavior. The team meetings between special and general educators, the site visit of Billy's teacher and the principal, the work/study program at McDonald's all typify interdependence. Rewards for learning new behavior and working

together are evidenced by the district's willingness to pay tuition costs for specialized training, by the school's willingness to release teachers to observe and learn from others, and by free rides on the back of Linda'a wheelchair for kids who push.

3. Augment Inservice Offerings to Include Group Process Training

Inservice classes, lectures and reading materials can help to increase skills, if practice in newly learned skills is provided. The total organizational change that mainstreaming implies suggests a more comprehensive approach (complexity). Offer training and practice to develop the interpersonal behaviors of conflict resolution, negotiating change, and goal setting as essential supplements to training that focuses on teaching skills. Attention to both interpersonal behavior and teaching skills will facilitate systemwide change.

4. Build a Reward System

Rogers' factor of relative advantage stresses the presentation of the innovation in a manner that displays its advantages. *The Second Handbook of Organizational Development in Schools* suggests that changes, like mainstreaming that require a great deal of effort and energy must be "bought." People are motivated to invest energy in pursuit of achievement, affiliation and power. Rewards for teachers and administrators who mainstream have been mentioned before in this *BULLETIN*. They include: released time to observe others and learn new skills, immediate support with difficult problems, retreats and workshops designed to help teachers

affiliate and learn new group process skills, tuition payments, and publicity and support for special efforts. The chance to form work groups to develop desirable new goals for the organization can be presented as a reward that offers the opportunity for success, power and affiliation.

5. Provide for Ongoing Communication

Regular meetings give teachers a chance to deal with small day-to-day problems before they become big ones. Meetings can reinforce interdependence, and provide a vehicle for information sharing, reassessing goals and discussing problems.

The dams in the mainstream can be removed. But, as Arends says, "significant and durable change does not and cannot occur quickly." A glance at the historical perspective section of this *BULLETIN* shows that society and schools have made a major shift in actions and attitudes toward handicapped individuals. This change has taken 60 years.

This *BULLETIN* has discussed barriers to making change. It has presented suggestions for breaking down those barriers. The dams in the mainstream must be removed by slow and careful procedures that attend to the total organization. The process of providing "least restrictive environments" to all handicapped children cannot be accomplished quickly if it is to be accomplished well.

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